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# DIALOGUE

*Dr*

BETWEEN

*Troy*

A PROTESTANT AND PAPIST,

ON THE

Subject of Popish ABSOLUTIONS, JUBILEES,  
and INDULGENCES:

WITH SOME

## OBSERVATIONS

ON

## FOUR LETTERS,

Some Time ago address'd by a Clergyman of the  
establish'd Church to his Popish Parishioners,  
on the same Subject.

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A  
D I A L O G U E  
B E T W E E N

A PROTESTANT AND PAPIST, &c.

*Protestant.* **G**OOD-Morrow, my friend: how dost thou do this morning?

*Papist.* Very well, my good friend. I am rejoiced to see you. Please to sit down. Pray, what news do you hear?

*Prot.* Nothing particular, only that I am just come from paying a visit to three or four friends of mine of your communion, and I find their superstition and blind zeal exceedingly roused by a jubilee, which I am informed your new Pope, Pius the VIth. has lately issued out, according to the custom of his Predecessors, who grant one every 25th year, and on their elevation to the Papal throne. I have been also told, that the Popish Chapels throughout the City and Country, are visited with crowds of votaries on this occasion: a glaring instance, in my opinion, of the powerful influence which that baneful vice of superstition has on the minds of the generality of mankind.

C. Sir,

*Pap.* Sir, we live in a country stock'd with a variety of different religious sects, and we find nothing more common among each different sect, than for one to brand the tenets and practices of the other with the appellations of error and superstition. Thus for instance: A grave Quaker, replenish'd with the Spirit, looks upon baptism as a superstitious error, and smiles at your simplicity and credulity as well as mine in believing, that the interior cleansing or sanctification of the soul can be effected by the sprinkling of a few drops of water on a new-born infant, and by muttering, at the same time, a certain form of words. An Anabaptist considers infant baptism as a pernicious abuse of the Sacrament, and I believe I have no need to inform you of what the professors of purer Protestantism think of your Bishops, their mitres and croziers; or of what opinion they entertain of the Athanasian Creed, which your Church and mine both hold in equal veneration. To conclude, Sir; a modern free-thinker, who fancies he moves in a superior sphere of knowledge above all other sects, inveighs against the entire system of Christianity, and deprecates our intellectual liberties cramped by the belief of so many absurd erroneous tenets.

*Prot.* I do not pretend, Sir, that the aspersions thrown upon the doctrine and tenets of one sect by another, is a convincing, or sufficient proof of such doctrines or tenets being false, or erroneous in themselves, unless there be otherwise solid and fundamental reasons to think and to prove them to be so: Such I have been always taught to think there are, for rejecting your popish tenet of jubilees and indulgences: a tenet that has no foundation in scripture, that on the contrary invades the prerogative of the Almighty by granting pardon and remission

remission of all sin; that in short it is an outrage against the divine justice, by giving licence and encouragement to commit the most enormous crimes with impunity.

*Pap.* What a monstrous notion you have of our jubilee and doctrine of indulgences! but I am not in the least surprized thereat, for I have found it to have been always the general practice of the writers and catechists of your Church, to misrepresent the tenets, doctrine, and discipline of our Church, and to set them out in the most absurd and odious colours, with a view of exposing them to the detestation and ridicule of the people.

*Prot.* I should be very sorry to find the writers of our Church guilty of any such unfair dealings, nor can I easily give credit to your assertion on that head; there may be indeed a few hot-headed writers among them, whose intemperate zeal might carry them a little beyond bounds in the use of some indiscreet expressions, and I suppose there may be also some writers of that stamp found in your Church as well as in ours.

*Pap.* I have turned over a good number of books and tracts of controversy wrote by Protestants against us, and, to the best of my knowledge, never could meet with one of them, that ever accused any of our writers of misrepresenting their doctrine or exposing their tenets or practices in a false light, amidst all the virulent zeal and invectives with which they attacked our religion. But you will scarce open any one book of controversy wrote by your writers, which you will not find to abound with charges and instances of misrepresentation and false expositions of our doctrine.

*P. You*



*Prot.* You surprize me greatly; it has been always my settled opinion, that our polemick writers and divines had a sufficient foundation, both in scripture and reason, to establish the truth of all our controverted doctrinal points on the ruins of Popery, without being reduced to the necessity of having recourse to the low and unwarrantable aids of misrepresentation and falshood.

*Pap.* Sir, I don't think there can be a stronger instance of misrepresentation, and of the insincerity and unfair dealing of your writers and teachers, than that very idea you have imbibed from them of our jubilees and indulgences; viz. of their being destitute of any foundation in scripture, of their being an usurpation of the Almighty's prerogative, injurious both to his mercy and justice, by granting an arbitrary pardon of future sins, and a solemn licence and encouragement to commit the most enormous crimes with impunity.

*Prot.* I must own, Sir, that this is pretty much the notion I have been taught to entertain of these jubilees granted by your Church. However, although I have been brought up in the Protestant persuasion, and hope to live and die in that communion; yet I assure you my mind is not so much influenced by the prejudices of education, or im-bittered so far by party zeal, as to be unwilling to give ear to any reasons you may have to offer in defence of any tenet of your persuasion, wherein you differ from ours. Indeed an affair I have on my hands at present, requires my presence at the other end of the town; but I promise to do myself the favour of returning and spending the afternoon with you, and as you accuse our controvertists of misrepresenting your doctrine and practice with respect to jubilees and indulgences, I will

will be curious to know and to hear in what light you represent them.

*Pap.* Sir, I will expect your company with pleasure, and hope to be able to convince you, at least, that our doctrine concerning the jubilee is not so destitute of foundation as you imagine, and that it does not deserve those hideous characters under which it has been represented to you.

## DIALOGUE II.

*Prot.* **S**IR, you see I am as good as my word. I am come according to the promise made you this morning, and really I could not but smile on meeting in my way hither, a good number of my Popish friends, with an unusual air of gravity and devotion in their countenances, going, as I suppose, to visit their chapels, which I am told is a necessary condition for obtaining that extraordinary indulgence so liberally and charitably granted by your Sovereign Pontiff in this present jubilee.

*Pap.* Sir, I think you should look on those Popish friends rather as objects of pity or indignation, than of laughter, considering the notion you entertain of a jubilee, viz. That it only gives licence and encouragement to commit sin, without fear of punishment; methinks, an eagerness in any persons to qualify themselves for the obtaining such a licence, should be thought to proceed more from a disposition to libertinism and licentiousness, than from a spirit of devotion or piety.

*Prot.* Well, well, Sir, let the notions I have imbibed of your jubilees or indulgences be what they

they will, the principles neither of my religion or education, as I told you this morning, have carried me to such a degree of partiality or party-affection, as to shut my ears against any reasons that my adversaries, or those of a different persuasion, may have to offer in vindication of their tenets; and since you accuse the writers of our church, of misrepresenting and exposing in a false light, your doctrine of jubilees and indulgences, as I have leisure to sit a while, I am curious to hear, in what colours you represent them. Pray then let me know, in a clear and precise manner, what you mean by these jubilees, that excite so much superstitious devotion among your people.

*Pap.* A jubilee, without entering into an unnecessary discussion of the etymology of the word, signified among the Jews, a festival which was observed by them every fiftieth year with great solemnity, in commemoration of their delivery from the Egyptian yoke. This was a happy year of remission and indulgence: no sooner was it arrived than all prisons were laid open, all captives were set at liberty, all crimes pardoned, all debts remitted, all injuries forgot, and all alienated goods and possessions were restored to their antient owners.

*Prot.* Sir, it is true we read in *Leviticus*, that every fiftieth year was, by sound of trumpet, proclaimed among the Jews for a year of jubilee; and that some such remission and privileges, as you have mentioned, were granted to all the inhabitants of the land. But pray what reference has all this to your popish jubilee?

*Pap.* You are sensible, Sir, that the sacred rites, practices, and ceremonies of the antient Mosaic law



law have been always considered, for the most part, as types and figures of those of the new: hence those exterior, visible, and temporal privileges, immunities, and graces, granted in the law of Moses every jubilee year, are justly looked upon as types and figures of those interior, invisible, spiritual privileges and graces granted by the Christian jubilee in the evangelical law.

*Prot.* Pray what are those invisible spiritual privileges or graces you mean, and which you think are granted by your Popish jubilee?

*Pap.* That we may frame some notion or idea of them, let us for a moment reflect on what we every day behold transacted in this visible world. We every day see therein, that vast numbers, by a violation of human laws, and by a disobedience to earthly kings, become victims to human justice. We see these victims, in proportion to their crimes, some deprived of their goods, some of their liberty, some we behold with their bodies seized, their limbs bound, imprisoned in a jail, carried before an earthly tribunal, tried, condemned, led to a place of execution, and there suffer a corporal death. The like happens every day with regard to our souls in the invisible world, as both faith and the scripture teach us; viz. there are a great number of souls, who, by a violation of the divine law, and a rebellion against God, become indebted to the divine justice; deprived of his grace and favour, they are led captive by the tyranny of their own passions, bound fast with the chains of their sins, and enslaved by Satan. They remain in this deplorable situation, till the period determined by God's justice is arrived; these unfortunate souls are then unloosed from their bodies,

dies, brought before the divine tribunal, tried, and condemned to suffer eternal death in a place of everlasting torments, if they depart this life in a state of impenitence; or if they should die penitent, without making any satisfaction to the divine justice by penitential works in this life, they are condemned to a place of temporary sufferings in the other, till this satisfaction, ordinarily required by the divine justice, is made. Now, as the enlarging of captives, and remitting their debts, as a general pardon granted to malefactors, freeing them from the sentence of death, knocking off their chains, and restoring them to their liberty, are those exterior corporal graces and privileges sometimes granted by temporal princes, and which were granted to all the inhabitants of the land every fiftieth year by the Jewish jubilee; so a general pardon offered to sinners, unloosing the chains of their sins, releasing them from their spiritual captivity, from the tyranny of Satan, restoring them to the liberty of the children of God, and, in short, delivering them from all debts of eternal or temporal punishment incurred by sin: these are the invisible spiritual privileges, or rather graces that are offered to all Christians in this universal jubilee proclaimed throughout the Catholic Church.

*Prot.* Sir, I have no objections against the analogy you suppose, or the comparison you have drawn, between those temporal graces and privileges granted in the old law by the Jewish jubilee, and those granted to Christians in the new, not by virtue of any jubilee, but by virtue of the death and passion of Jesus Christ for us: nay, I think this analogy or comparison founded on the authority of the sacred penmen, in whom we find frequent mention

tion of the chains and bands of sin, of our delivery from this bondage, from the spiritual captivity, tyranny and slavery of Satan, by the great mystery of our redemption. But I do not see how it makes for your present purpose; I suppose you mean that, as a year wherein these temporal graces you have mentioned were granted to the Jews, was termed a jubilee year; so the year, wherein there is a grant of these spiritual graces you have also mentioned, and which you fondly imagine are conferred by your Pope, may be also called a jubilee year.

*Pap.* I mean that too.

*Prot.* Why then I think all you have said hitherto is very little to the purpose; for observe, though we read in the 25th chap. of *Leviticus*, that, by an express command of God, there was to be every 50th year a jubilee, and a general release and discharge from debts and bondage among the Jews, yet we find no such command or appointment in the Gospel, for the grant of such a privilege. I would be very curious to know, in what part of the New Testament our Saviour commanded that a jubilee should be observed, and those spiritual graces and privileges conferred either every 50 or 25 years, or upon the elevation of one of your Popes to the papal throne.

*Pap.* Sir, I allow you there is no such command, nor is it necessary there should. I think it is sufficient, that our divine Redeemer invested his Church, or her supreme visible Pastor, with a prerogative or power of granting these jubilees, and of dispensing these spiritual graces, and that he has left the exercise of that power to the determination and judgment of the same Church, according to the rules of prudence and discretion, and under



the influence of that Blessed Spirit, which he promised should be her perpetual director; and I do not find in any part of the New Testament, that he has forbid her to exercise this power at any of them times you have mentioned, or at any other time whatsoever.

*Prot.* Sir, the prerogative that is exercised, and the favours that are pretended to be granted in time of your Popish jubilee, are extraordinary and of a superior nature to those granted, or to the prerogative exercised in the Jewish one: and as there was an express year ordered by divine appointment for the jubilee of the Jews, methinks there should have been also one appointed in the new law, if the exercise of such a power, or the dispensing of such extraordinary favours, had been conformable to divine institution. Now, as you allow there is no express command or appointment of any time or year in the Gospel for the grant of such a Jubilee, my opinion is, that it is only a groundless practice, arbitrarily introduced by your Church, and only proper to nourish the superstition of the ignorant people.

*Pap.* What, Sir! Do you then think, that the time for the observance or exercise of every sacred rite, ceremony, or necessary act of religion, should be determined by a divine positive command, expressed in Scripture? If you do, I will shew manifestly your error from instances of some important observances and practices of religion, equally held sacred and necessary in your Church, as well as in ours, although there is no express command in scripture for them. Pray, do you not think the keeping of Sunday, and a cessation from all servile work on that day in honour of God, to be a necessary act of religion? Now I would be glad to

to know in what part of the New Testament this day is, by a positive command, set apart for religious worship among Christians, as most certainly the Sabbath, or Saturday, was determined by an express precept for the Jews. You may then as well tell me, as you have told me with respect to our jubilee, that the keeping of Sunday, and abstaining from all servile work on that day, is a groundless superstitious practice; because there is no express command in Scripture to that purpose.

Is not the baptizing of infants, before they come to the use of reason, an article of great importance, and on which the salvation of millions depend, although it is disallowed by the Anabaptists? Now, suppose an Anabaptist should require of you to shew him an express command in scripture for the baptism of infants, what answer would you give him?

*Prot.* Sir, I should readily answer by telling him, that there was no need of an express command for infant baptism, that it was enough that Jesus Christ instituted baptism as necessary for all to obtain admittance into the kingdom of heaven; and that there was no reason why infants should be excluded from so great a benefit, as they are born in original sin, which, not being effaced by baptism, would exclude them from entering into the kingdom of heaven.

*Pap.* Very right, Sir; but then I may answer you much in the same manner, that there was no need of an express command in scripture, or an appointment of a jubilee year, that it was enough that Jesus Christ had invested his Church with a power of dispensing those spiritual favours and graces, and of removing those bonds and impediments

ments that obstruct or retard the soul from entering into the kingdom of heaven, and that the faithful frequently stand in need of obtaining the benefit of the exertion of this extraordinary privilege.

*Prot.* Sir, I do not allow your Church, or any other Church whatsoever, to have been invested with any such power, or with those extraordinary prerogatives you pretend of granting pardons, absolutions, jubilees, indulgences, and the like: I have read the New Testament over and over, and I find no foundation at all for asserting or claiming any such exorbitant power.

*Pap.* That may be, Sir; there are vast numbers who read the scriptures, and find doctrines therein, which really are not contained in them, and there are numbers of others who overlook those that are, which perhaps may be your case. However, be that as it will, at our next meeting, I will lay before you the foundation we have in scripture for the exercise of that power, which seems in your eyes so ill-grounded, and withal so exorbitant, viz. that of granting absolutions, jubilees, or indulgences, which are always inseparably connected together, there being never a jubilee granted or obtained, without the benefit of sacramental absolution. I must bid you adieu for the present, as business calls me abroad, and hope you will excuse me.

I am, Sir,

Your humble servant.

DIALOGUE



## DIALOGUE III.

*Pap.* **S**IR, at our last meeting, you told me you had read the scripture frequently, and never could find any foundation for that extraordinary power which our Church claims and exercises, of dispensing her absolutions, her jubilees, or indulgences. I promised to give you satisfaction on that head, and will now, as I have leisure, comply with my promise; and only beg you will give a serious attention, without prejudice or partiality, to what I have to offer.

*Prot.* I promise I shall; but I would be glad you would first give me a more precise and distinct notion of your absolutions, indulgences and jubilees, and of the difference you make between them.

*Pap.* I will, Sir.—Absolution is an act of jurisdiction, whereby the Church, in virtue of the commission and authority she received from Jesus Christ, remits to sincere penitents the sins they have committed against God, and the guilt of eternal punishment they have incurred thereby; and this absolution is always pre-required to the gaining of an indulgence. An indulgence is a remission, by virtue of the same authority, of the temporary punishment which, according to the ordinary course of divine justice, the sinner remains liable to, after his sins, as to the guilt of eternal punishment, are blotted out by sacramental absolution, or perfect contrition. This indulgence is called a plenary one, when it remits the entire temporary punishment, which the sinner is liable to; and when this indulgence is extended to the whole church, and  
accompanied

accompanied with certain privileges, and more ample faculties granted by the supreme Pastor to the inferior pastors, with respect to censures, dispensations, reserved cases, usually expressed in the grant, it is then what we call a jubilee.

*Prot.* This is a most extraordinary jurisdiction and power your Church assumes; I am impatient to hear what foundation she has for it in scripture.

*Pap.* A very clear strong one. I suppose you have read the 16th and 18th chap. of St. Matthew, and the 20th of St. John.

~~Matthew~~ In the 1st of the forementioned places, you know our Divine Redeemer, after promising to build his Church on St. Peter, whom he called a rock, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against it, in the 19th verse addresses him in these ever-memorable words: *To thee I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* In the 18th chap. of the same Evangelist, he renews the same promise to all the Apostles, in the same words: *Amen I say unto you: whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven.* This ample power, which he had thus promised, he in the 20th chap. of St. John conferred on them, in the most solemn and perspicuous manner, in these following words: *As my Father hath sent me so I also send you, and having breathed on them, he said, receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.* Here, Sir, is a power granted to the first pastors of the Church without any exception, limitation, or reserve, of remitting  
and

and retaining sin, of binding and loosing all such bonds of sin, as might hinder or retard a Christian soul from entering into heaven; and as the power of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, governing the church, was not limited to the Apostles alone, but was also extended to their successors in the ministry for future ages, so likewise was this ample jurisdiction and power of absolving from sin, and of binding and loosing: and it is in virtue of this commission granted to her first pastors, and descending to their successors, that the church has, in all ages, exercised the power both of absolving from sin, and of granting jubilees and indulgences.

*Prot.* Sir, I admit the texts you have quoted, but not your interpretation of them; for to the best of my knowledge our divines, by these different texts you have cited, admit not any real power conferred of remitting sin, or loosing the bonds of sins, but only a power or warrant to declare, or to announce remission of sin, on repentance and faith in Jesus Christ: for as a clergyman of the established church of Ireland, in one of his spirited letters lately addressed to his parishioners of the popish communion, concerning your absolutions, justly observes in discussing the power conveyed to the ministers of the gospel, by the forementioned words of Christ. “ They  
 “ have received, (these are his words,) not  
 “ surely the power to seat themselves on the  
 “ throne of the Almighty, and to deal out mercy  
 “ and condemnation to whom they list.” No, they have only received, (adds he,) but “ meerly  
 “ power, as faithful Stewards of what Christ has  
 “ delivered, to preach unto men the terms, upon  
 “ which he has declared, that salvation shall be  
 C “ obtained



“ obtained, to publish unto all, who shall sincerely  
 “ depart from, and detest their former transgres-  
 “ sions and walk in newness of life, remission of  
 “ sins, to denounce to the impenitent and ob-  
 “ stinate, the dreadful judgments, that unavoid-  
 “ ably await them.” Thus this modern writer  
 justly delivers the sense of our church concerning  
 the texts you have quoted, and on which you  
 rear the whole fabric of your mighty priestly pre-  
 rogative.

*Pap.* Sir, I suppose this modern writer you men-  
 tion is the clergyman of your church, who, a few  
 years ago, addressed four letters to his parishioners of  
 our communion, with a view of reclaiming them,  
 as he pretends, from their errors, and particular-  
 ly of unmasking the impostures of our absoluti-  
 ons and indulgences, against which he has de-  
 claimed, through the whole course of them let-  
 ters, with the greatest acrimony.

*Prot.* Sir, it is the very same, and I think he  
 has sufficiently demonstrated the absurdity of your  
 extravagant pretensions.

*Pap.* Sir, I am very glad that you have men-  
 tioned him, as it will give me a fair opportunity  
 of justifying the animadversions I have, in the be-  
 ginning of our conversation, made on the insincer-  
 ity of your controvertists, in misrepresenting the  
 tenets of our church and exposing them in the  
 most odious colours to excite the detestation of  
 the people. I dont think that I have ever read a  
 more flagrant instance of this, than what the afore-  
 said author has afforded us in them four letters,  
 as I may have occasion to remark. But to return  
 to the subject we were upon : According to your  
 and this writer's interpretation of the texts I have  
 produced, the ministers of the church are vested  
 with

with no other power of remitting or retaining sin, of binding or loosing, than that of merely *announcing remission or retention of sin*, to those whose sins are already remitted or retained, independent of their authority, and with no other power of binding or loosing the bonds of sin, than of simply declaring those whose bonds as yet remain, or have been loosed independent of their ministry. Now such an interpretation seems manifestly to pervert the most obvious and natural sense of the Scripture. This seems evident, first, from the familiar figures and comparison our divine Redeemer made use of, viz. that of giving the keys, and of binding and loosing; for, in the 1st place, the keys of a house or of a town are never committed to the steward or governor thereof, merely to signify that the doors or gates are shut or open, but also, to invest them with a power of shutting or opening them. 2dly, When magistrates are invested with a power of committing criminals, and of binding them or loosing their chains, who ever imagined they only were authorised to declare those who were to be committed and those who were to be fettered, and those who were not? 3dly, According to the sentiments of the letter writer, sins are remitted, and the bonds thereof unloosed previous to, or, independent of, any declaration made by the church or her ministers, merely in consideration of the sinners repentance: this he affirms, (p. 88 of his 3d letter). I would be then desirous to know, to what purpose has Jesus Christ given to the first pastors of his church the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. To what purpose did he invest the Apostles with an authority of binding or loosing, remitting or retaining sin, if, independent of those prerogatives, every

finner can get admittance into heaven, can obtain remission of his sins and a release from the bonds thereof? Pray, Sir, what would avail the committing the keys of a house to a steward, if, independent of him, every stranger or domestic could go in and go out, lock and unlock at their own pleasure? What would avail an authority in judges or Magistrates to commit, or to fetter criminals, or to release them, if, independent of their authority, they could release themselves? It is plain then, that denying a power in the church of absolving from sin, of releasing the bonds thereof, or a necessity of having recourse to her pastors for these purposes, is manifestly denying, or disbelieving the Scripture, and making void the institution of Jesus Christ.

*Prot.* Sir, I must allow, that the texts you have quoted in support of the priestly power taken according to the letter, bear a large import. The giving the keys of the kingdom of heaven, a divine promise of binding or loosing above, whatsoever would be bound or loosed below; an assurance also, of remitting and retaining whatsoever sins would be here remitted or retained; these expressions, I must acknowledge, taken in a literal signification, seem to imply a very extensive jurisdiction. But Sir, you do not reflect that, according to the rule laid down by St. Augustin, the words of the sacred Scripture are not to be understood in a natural or literal sense, when any absurdities or inconveniencies follow from thence.

*Pap.* Sir, I admit the rule laid down by that holy Doctor: but pray what are those absurdities, or inconveniencies that would follow from taking the



the forementioned texts in their obvious natural meaning?

*Prot.* Why, Sir, I think a great many, but especially this one: the absolving from sin and from the guilt of eternal, or if you will have it, temporal punishment, incurred thereby: the relaxing the obligations due to the divine justice, and opening the gates of heaven for a sinner, in this manner, seem to me to be an inherent, incommunicable, inalienable prerogative of the Almighty, and to vest any mortal whatsoever, be he priest, bishop, or pope, or to suppose them, especially many among them, who were monsters of iniquity, vested with any such prerogative, is an insupportable inconvenience and absurdity.

*Pap.* Sir, the absolving from sin or from the guilt and the punishment due to it, by a principal supreme and independent authority, is certainly an incommunicable, unalienable prerogative of the Almighty: but to absolve from sin and its consequences, by a ministerial delegated authority, is a power that Jesus Christ has conferred on the first pastors of his church, and their successors, in the most evident manner independent of their merit. But pray Sir, is not raising the dead to life, curing the blind, the the lame, the deaf, and the dumb, by a word of command, a prerogative of the Almighty power?

*Prot.* I cannot deny but it is.

*Pap.* If then our divine Redeemer, as you must allow, did confer this power on the first pastors of his church, because he judged it expedient for the propagation of his gospel; I would be glad to know, why he could not confer on them, and their successors, a power of remitting

ting sin, and freeing the flock in all ages from the bonds thereof, which is a thing so expedient for the salvation of mankind: now supposing he could do it, as plainly appears he could, I ask you what more perspicuous terms could he make use of, to signify his having really bequeathed that power to the church, than those we find in these texts.

“To you I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” &c. Again I say unto you, “whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. — Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins ye shall forgive they are forgiven, whose sins ye shall retain they are retained.”

*Prot.* Sir, the texts just mentioned on which you erect the fabric of your priestly power admit of different interpretations, according to the author of the forementioned letters to his popish parishioners, so that no efficacious argument can be deduced from them to prove such a pretended power, as said author justly insinuates.

*Pap.* I am glad, Sir, you have given me an opportunity of remarking his interpretations, which indeed appear very curious: for after his forementioned explanation of these celebrated texts, which, as I have shewn, perverts their plain and obvious signification, he adds two more. 1<sup>st</sup>, That the words addressed by Jesus Christ to his Apostles, may signify an extraordinary ability conferred on them of *discerning spirits*, whereby they might judge the secrets of hearts, and know, with certainty, whose repentance is only fictitious, or whose is sincere: the second is, That by *sins* may be understood *bodily infirmities*. So that the meaning

meaning of these memorable words, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins ye shall forgive they are forgiven, whose sins ye shall retain they are retained*, addressed by Jesus Christ to his Apostles on the day of his glorious ascension, according to our epistolary controvertist, may be this; whose bodily diseases and infirmities ye remit, they shall be remitted, and whose bodily diseases and infirmities ye retain, they shall be retained. Such are the witty comments on these scriptural texts by your author, who, out of a tender zeal for the salvation of his popish parishioners, has undertaken, in four Letters, to unmask the illusion and imposture of popish absolutions, assuring them, that the absolving power, claimed by the ministers of popery, is unsupported by revelation, and the sole invention of ambitious, ill-designing men. I ask, what proof can be produced out of scripture for any one article of Christian faith, which may not be eluded by such strained, arbitrary interpretations?

*Prot.* Sir, let these interpretations be as strained, and as arbitrary as you please, I think they are more admissible than yours, or those of your priests, who pretend to derive from them texts such an exorbitant, absurd power. What, Sir, is it reasonable to think, that your priests, in virtue of these texts, “ have received a power of seating  
 “ themselves on the throne of the Almighty, and of  
 “ dealing out mercy and condemnation to whom  
 “ they list? can we suffer ourselves to be persuaded  
 “ by them, that the divine forgiveness is to be ob-  
 “ tained with our hearts wedded to sin, without any  
 “ amendment, or inward change of mind, by the  
 “ absolution which man bestows? If we are instructed  
 “ to believe that the savage and brutal mind, though  
 “ still remaining in its savage and brutal state, can  
 “ be



“ be rendered acceptable to unchangeable truth,  
 “ and unblemished purity, then is all that can de-  
 “ serve the name of religion totally at an end : it is  
 “ the utter extirpation of it. If we are taught to  
 “ believe, by your priests, that there is not a wish  
 “ but we may gratify, nor a pleasure but we may  
 “ indulge in, provided we can procure the holy  
 “ treasures of the church to be opened unto us : I  
 “ say, to hold such doctrines as these is not the  
 “ spoiling, but the final destroying, and rooting up,  
 “ of all religion : it provokes every passion, it in-  
 “ flames every lust : it calls forth the whole uproar  
 “ of the appetites, and hardens us to a degree of  
 “ guilt, from which, dreadful thought !—there is  
 “ scarce a possibility of returning.” It is in this man-  
 ner, and in these words, the forementioned zealous  
 pastor of our established church, in his epistolary  
 address to the papists of his parish, justly inveighs  
 against the exorbitant, absolving power, claimed  
 by their priests, as derived from Christ’s com-  
 mission, and demonstrates the absurdity thereof.

*Pap.* Sir, the monstrous colours in which that  
 protestant pastor paints our doctrine, concerning  
 the priestly power of binding and loosing, of re-  
 mitting and retaining sin, abundantly justifies the  
 animadversions I have before made on the insin-  
 cerity of your writers, in representing the tenets  
 of our church in such a light as must render them  
 equally detestable and absurd ; for what can be  
 more odious and absurd, than to assert or exer-  
 cise a power of absolving sinners, even persever-  
 ing in their sins, and in a state of impenitence ?  
 Such a power, indeed, would be subversive of all  
 religion, would open a gap to all licentiousness ;  
 nay it would be repugnant to the justice of God  
 not only to grant such a power to his church, but  
 even

even to exercise it himself: and yet it is such a power as this we claim and exercise according to the insinuations of your minister, in his charitable address to his popish parishioners; hence he gravely asks them, "if popery has not a secret charm, and that caught by the seducing bribes it holds out to them, of absolutions and indulgences, they are unwilling to leave a religion, which lays the favourite passions of the human heart under such little restraint. He afterwards bids every one of them look into their own heart, and say:—Is not this same heart of theirs in league with their wonder-working priest, and do not their own vicious inclinations and ruling lusts lead them to wish well to a religion so complaisant and alluring, where they have this easy method of setting all matters right at the last." What more could be said, although the popish priests would say to their flocks: persevere in your sins, give a loose to all your corrupt passions, do not trouble yourselves about repentance, because we can absolve you whenever you please. Is not this a rare method this tender-hearted zealous pastor took to convert his deluded popish parishioners, by endeavouring to make them believe what the very meanest, and most illiterate among them, by experience, know to be downright calumnies, misrepresentations and falshood? the very recital of them is sufficient to confute them.

*Prot.* But pray, Sir, do you not believe that there are no sins, however numerous and enormous, which may not be remitted in virtue of the priestly prerogative in your church, and if that be the case, as I am sure it is, pray is not this an encouragement to sin? I should think so.

D

*Pap.*

*Pap.* Pray, Sir, is the obligation of a sincere repentance, of quitting sin, and the occasions thereof, of amending our lives, of making restitution to our injured neighbour, of forgiving injuries, of being reconciled to our enemies; are all these an encouragement to sin, or to persevere therein?

*Prot.* No, Sir.

*Pap.* It is then an article of our belief, that without those dispositions, there can be no valid absolution, no indulgence, ever obtained: So that they are far from being an encouragement to sin. This your epistolary controvertist could not be ignorant of: but if he had retrenched his false suppositions and misrepresentations, he would not have had an opportunity of displaying his parts and learning, by a pompous parade of marginal quotations, or by making so many vain, empty flourishes in proving what no one denies.

*Prot.* Well, Sir, after all you have said, and let you have what opinion you please of your popish absolutions, jubilees or indulgences, we Protestants stand upon the secure side for the obtaining of absolution and remission of our sins, and of the punishment due to them.

*Pap.* How so?

*Prot.* Because we depend upon God's mercy alone, and the infinite merits of his incarnate Son, our divine Redeemer, for the remission of our sins, and of the punishment due to them; and you depend on your popish absolutions, jubilees, indulgences; and there can be no doubt but the former foundation is more secure than the latter.

*Pap.* Sir, there is no doubt but the mercies of God, and the merits of his son Jesus Christ, are the main foundation on which the hopes of every true



true Christian depend. Our dispute is not about that, but about the mode of applying them merits. Pray, Sir, has not our divine Redeemer instituted certain modes of applying the virtue of his infinite merits to our souls: for instance, has he not instituted sacraments, which are necessarily to be made use of for that purpose?

*Prot.* Sir, we believe he has instituted two sacraments, baptism and the supper of our Lord, which we look upon as necessary to salvation.

*Pap.* Now, Suppose a Quaker, or any other sectary, who denies, or has rejected these sacraments, should argue against you thus for his sect: we depend upon a more secure foundation for our salvation than you; for we depend upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and you depend on vain, weak elements, or insignificant rites. I ask you in this supposition, would you have a better opinion of the security of this sectary's salvation?

*Prot.* I should not; because to reject any mode of applying Christ's merits to us, which are evidently of his institution, as those two sacraments undoubtedly are, is to obstruct the efficacy of them, or to prevent our reaping the fruits of them.

*Pap.* This is exactly the case of the present dispute between Protestants and Papists; you believe that an application to the pastors of the church is vain and fruitless to obtain remission of sin, or a relaxation of the punishment due to it, because you acknowledge no such power really conferred upon them. We, on the contrary, believe, that this application is necessary, because such a power, we believe, has been conferred on them by Jesus Christ, in as plain words as could be expressed: and I defy you to produce out of scripture, against any sectary, stronger words in

proof of the two fore-mentioned sacraments, than those in favour of the priestly power. *Whatever ye shall bind on earth, &c. whose sins ye shall forgive, &c.* So that, upon the whole, I think we are on the securer side.

*Prot.* Why?

*Pap.* Because we repose our faith and confidence in the promises made by Jesus Christ to the pastors of his church, of loosing whatsoever they shall loose, of forgiving whatsoever they forgive, provided we dispose ourselves properly. But you place no faith nor confidence in any such promises; you do not think an application to any pastors, in consequence of such promises, necessary for obtaining remission of your sins, so that you make void the power given by Jesus Christ, and annul his institution.

*Prot.* What, Sir, If I confess to God alone, if I have a true and hearty sorrow and repentance for my sins, and a lively faith in the merits of my Redeemer, cannot I expect or obtain remission for them, unless forsooth I make my application to a priest, and require his absolution and forgiveness? must the gates of heaven be for ever shut against me, unless he unlocks them for me? it is ridiculous, it is absurd, it is a want of charity and confidence in the promise of the divine mercy made in favour of penitent sinners, to believe any such thing.

*Pap.* Sir, there can be no sincere sorrow, no true repentance for sin, no true faith in the merits of Christ, which do not imply an earnest desire and intention of complying with every mode of reconciliation he has enjoined. An application to the pastors of the church is one of these modes in consequence of the power of binding and  
loosing,

loosing, remitting and retaining sin, conferred on them. Listen to the following words of the holy Doctor St. Austin, which perhaps may have some weight with you: *let no one say I treat in private with God, I confess to him alone; for then it would be to no purpose he had said, what you loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven; it would be in vain the power of the keys were given to the church.* In short, Sir, if upon a pretended dependance on the mercies of God, and on the merits of Jesus Christ, you reject this mode of reconciliation he has so evidently enjoined, a Quaker, or any other sectary upon the same pretended dependance, may reject baptism and the supper of the Lord, both which you believe necessary to salvation.

*Prot.* You may say what you please, Sir, but I think it an absurdity, no less shocking to reason than injurious to the divine prerogative, to suppose, for instance, an illiterate, wicked priest invested with a real power of absolving me from my sins.

*Pap.* Sir, the whole system of Christianity has ever yet seemed absurd to the proud reason of unbelieving man. The adoration of a crucified God, born in a stable, was an absurd piece of foolery in the judgment of the learned heathens; the investing a few illiterate fishermen with a commission to convert these wise men, was not very agreeable to the dictates of human prudence; and the conferring on them a real spiritual power of absolving from sin, and of opening the gates of heaven to sinners, seems, I am persuaded, to you a no less absurd mode of proceeding. But I shall only ask you one question: Either Jesus Christ, by virtue of his infinite merits, could communi-  
cate



cate such a power to the first pastors of his church, or not: if you say he could not, say, how he could communicate to them a power of working miracles, of raising the dead. If you say he could, but did not, I ask you, supposing he were willing to do it, what more convincing words could he make use of than these, *whose sins ye shall forgive are forgiven; whatever you shall loose on earth shall be, &c.* And why could he not entail that spiritual power on their successors, as well as that of administering the sacraments, notwithstanding any personal demerit in some of them?

*Prot.* Sir, I cannot, nor ever will allow, that the Almighty God could grant any power to men, that clashes with his divine attribute of justice, that disarms all the terrors thereof, that encourages rebellious man to sin. Such is the power your priests claim by their indulgences and absolutions, which they have ready and at hand for all who are foolish enough to come to them. By these they make every deluded confessing sinner believe, that provided he gives a small sum of money, he may be, notwithstanding his impenitent libertine heart, cleansed from every stain of sin, and may be rendered pure and spotless enough, for an immediate admission into the kingdom of heaven.

*Pap.* I see plainly, Sir, you cannot divest your mind from these notions you have imbibed of our absolutions and indulgences, from the Author of the four Letters addressed to his popish parishioners, which we have before-mentioned, and whose expressions you adopt; and certainly my opinion is, that the power, which according to his insinuations and representations our priests claim, and exercise of granting absolutions and indulgences to every sinner, notwithstanding his obduracy and impenitence, would

would clash with the divine attribute of justice, and therefore could not be granted by God. But that Author, unless blinded by prejudice, could not be ignorant, that our priests, for a valid and lawful exercise of their power, require in every sinner all the conditions of a true and sincere repentance, which therefore hinder their absolving power from being any encouragement to sin. As for your insinuation that our popish jubilees and absolutions are dispensed by our priests for money; this you take from the fore-mentioned Author; but experience evinces the falsity of the charge, and makes him pass with his popish parishioners for a rank calumniator.

*Prot.* Be that as it may, and let your priests require whatever they please for the due exercise of their absolving, indulging power, I think it is no small encouragement to sin, that you may have absolution whenever you please to have recourse to one of your priests.

*Pap.* Well, Sir, at any rate you will have it, that the promise Jesus Christ made to the pastors of his church, of absolving or forgiving those in heaven, whom they would absolve or forgive on earth, taken in its plain, obvious sense, is an encouragement to sin. But pray do not you believe, and is it not the doctrine of your church, that every sinner, independent of an application made to any pastor of the church, may, on a sincere, penitent confession made to God alone, hope for pardon and absolution from all his sins, and from all the punishment due to them?

*Prot.* We do, and this is a doctrine we comfort ourselves with, and it is grounded on the promise of mercy made by God in favour of repenting sinners.

*Pap.*

*Pap.* Why is not this promise of divine mercy to the sinner, when he has a mind to confess to God alone, an encouragement to sin, since he may expect pardon, whenever he is pleased to have recourse to the divine mercy?

*Prot.* I think the reason is plain: because a confession made to God alone, with a true, penitent heart, is the work, not of man alone, but of the divine grace, which can never excite to sin. It is also made to the supreme searcher of hearts, who can judge of the sincerity of the penitent.

*Pap.* Very right, Sir, you seem then to think, that a confession made with a true penitent heart to God, through the ministry of a pastor of the church, is the work of man alone. Can you seriously think so? but pray, Sir, let me ask you one question: The more humbling a confession is to a sinner, the more repugnant it is to his corrupt nature, the more mortifying it is to his pride, the more capable it is of confounding him: is there not required a greater strength of grace to make such a confession?

*Prot.* Let us suppose it does.

*Pap.* It is evident then, that confession, as practised in our church, is accompanied with the fore-mentioned characters, but not as it is in yours.

*Prot.* How so, Sir?

*Pap.* Because, in your church, you require only for the remission of sin, a confession made to God alone: now, Sir, where is the great shame, confusion, or repugnance in retiring into a closet, in confessing our sins to a God, to whose all-seeing eye the slightest blemish in our souls is already conspicuous? whereas, in our church, the confession must be made to God, through the ministry of a pastor thereof, to whom the most shameful



ful weaknesses must be disclosed, and which the pride of our hearts would fain hide from the eyes of all mankind. This confession, with all its humbling circumstances, we look upon as essentially connected with the due exercise of the power of binding and loosing, of forgiving or retaining sin, which Jesus Christ has in the strongest terms bequeathed to the pastors of his church. Now to represent this confession, as your fore-mentioned Author does, as a scheme contrived by ambitious, ill-designing men, who laid this burthensome yoke on themselves, as well as on the rest of mankind, has all the air of an extravagant fiction; and to declaim against it as an encouragement to sin, is a most glaring falshood refuted by the experience of all ages. What then, if the popish parishioners of your zealous minister find by their own experience, that frequenting our tribunals of confession, qualifying themselves for absolutions and jubilees, lay a restraint on their vicious passions, contribute to preserve them from sin, and to restore that interior purity of soul, so necessary to render us acceptable to God: If, on the contrary, they find by the same experience, that a neglect of confession, a contempt of absolutions and jubilees takes away all restraint, loosens the reins of their vicious passions, and plunges them into the mire of their sensualities, what must they think of his declamations against the falshood, artifice and vanity of these confessions, absolutions and jubilees, or of his assertions, that they are an encouragement to sin? must they not look upon them as calumny and deceit? will they not be apt to consider his protestations, his tender professions of love and zeal for the salvation of their souls, to be according to the admonition of the Apostle, the

counterfeit bleatings of the prowling wolf in sheep's cloaths, who seeks to devour the flock?

*Prot.* I perceive, Sir, your zeal is heated as much as that of our Author: but you may say what you please in favour of your popish confessions, absolutions and jubilees: yet after all I think it ridiculous to impose so burthenfome a yoke on the Christian world, when an ample remission of sin can be obtained by a confession made to God alone.

*Pap.* If so, you reduce the priestly power of binding and loosing, of remitting and retaining sin, expressed in scripture, to a meer shadow; I would be glad to know how the priests of your church can be said to bind or loose; or in short, how do they exercise that power bequeathed by Jesus Christ to the first pastors of *his* church, and to their successors, of forgiving or retaining sin?

*Prot.* Sir, the priests of our church exercise the power of binding and loosing, or absolving us from the shackles of our sins, "when, like faithful stewards of Christ, they preach or declare unto us the terms upon which he has declared, that salvation, and consequently a remission or absolution from our sins shall be obtained." Thus our fore-mentioned zealous pastor, who judiciously observes, that the absolutions in our church are merely *declarative*, as far as they regard sinners being restored to forgiveness and mercy with the Almighty.

*Pap.* Very well, Sir, according to this exposition, any layman, who in the absence of a parson, is called to visit a dying member of your communion oppressed with sin, if in a pathetic strain he enforces the terms of a sincere repentance, upon which remission of sin and salvation are to be obtained; or if he denounces to the impenitent

penitent and obstinate the dreadful judgments of God, then he exercises the office of the keys, or the power of binding and loosing, with as much benefit and advantage as the parson could; or in fine, if the patient himself is thoroughly instructed in the terms of remission of sin and salvation, he need not trouble himself about the ministry of any pastor whomsoever of his church, or about his declarative sentence: as independent of it, he may obtain a release from the shackles of his sins by complying with the terms proposed. What is all this, but reducing to a mere phantom the sacred prerogative of the keys of the heavenly kingdom, and the power of binding and loosing bequeathed by Jesus Christ to the pastors of his church in such plain words, as will eternally confute the strained interpretations you put on them? reflect, Sir, for once, he did not say to them, whatsoever you shall declare to be bound, loosed, or forgiven on earth, shall be so in heaven, but *whatever you shall bind or loose, or forgive on earth, shall be so in heaven.*

*Prot.* What, Sir, if a member of your church, in a dying way, cannot find one of your priests to hear his confession, and to absolve him, must he be damned for ever, let him be ever so penitent? This is shocking doctrine, inconsistent with the mercies of God!

*Pap.* Sir, we do not teach that doctrine: we admit a person in the forementioned circumstances can be saved by a sincere act of perfect contrition or repentance: but this act necessarily must include an ardent desire of confessing his sins, if it could be done, and when it can be done, to the pastors of the church, in order to obtain absolution: and the Almighty, we believe, is so merciful



ful as to accept the will for the deed, in such an emergency.

*Prot.* I perceive, Sir, you are so strongly fettered with the shackles of superstition, as not to be easily beat out of the extravagant notions you conceive of your popish jubilees, absolutions and indulgences. Prejudices early imbibed are most commonly too hard for reason to overcome.

*Pap.* Very fine indeed. The doctrine of our church must be deemed superstitious, because it does not chime with your reason or fancy. But, pray, Sir, can any doctrines be justly reputed superstitious, that are grounded on the holy scriptures?

*Prot.* By no means. The holy scriptures alone are our unerring rule of faith.

*Pap.* Very well, Sir, I examine these scriptures. I cast my eyes on the xvth Chap. of St. Matthew. I therein read these memorable words addressed by Jesus Christ to St. Peter, the first pastor of his church. *I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, that is a rock, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* I afterwards cast my eyes on the 18th chap. of the same Evangelist, wherein Jesus Christ declares, in the 17th and 18th v. that he who will not hear his church, is to be reputed as a heathen and publican; and that whatsoever her first pastors, his Apostles, should bind on earth, should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they should loose upon earth, should be also loosed in heaven. I then peruse the xxth chap. of St. John, 22d and 23d v. wherein I find,  
he

he, after breathing on his disciples, addresses them in these memorable words: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." I consider attentively these three remarkable fore-mentioned passages in the holy scriptures. I find, in consequence of the keys of the kingdom of heaven given by our Saviour to St. Peter, in the first passage, a succession of pastors in his see for near 1800 years, claiming and exercising a power of granting indulgences to sinners, or of loosing those bonds which obstruct their entrance into the kingdom of heaven. I find the power of granting absolutions, or remission of sin, to have been at the æra of your reformation, the doctrine and practice of the universal church, grounded upon the 2d and 3d passage. Notwithstanding all this, if we are to believe you, and your zealous epistolary controvertist, there is not the least foundation in the scriptures for the doctrine of Popish jubilees, indulgences and absolutions; all Christendom was tricked into a belief of these doctrines by a few crafty, ambitious, designing men, who domineered over the faith and consciences of mankind, until the imposture was unmasked by the first reformers. As for the fore-mentioned texts of holy scripture, according to his learned, ingenious comments upon them, they afford no manner of foundation: for although our divine Redeemer promised in them to give the keys of his heavenly kingdom to St. Peter, he assures us it was not the keys of his heavenly kingdom he meant, but the keys of the gospel, that is, power to preach the gospel: although he assured his disciples, that whatsoever they should bind or loose on earth, should be bound and loosed in heaven,

ven, according to him, they received no power of binding or loosing the shackles of our sins, but only were authorised to declare those sinners who are to be bound or unloosed from them; and tho' Jesus Christ breathed on his disciples assembled together before his ascension, conferred upon them the Holy Ghost, and in express literal terms, declared, that whose sins they should forgive, should be forgiven, and whose they should retain, should be retained: he tells us, that by these words they received no power of forgiving sin, that by forgiving or remitting sin, in this text, as also by the power of binding and loosing in the former ones, may be understood the power of remitting bodily infirmities, which he allows the Apostles did receive, even with the power of restoring or taking away life. Now in return to the few curious questions your zealous epistolary controvertist proposes to our priests to answer if they can, I will propose to him one or two to answer to his popish parishioners, if he can. What is the reason, as sins are termed, in the stile of scripture, the cords, bonds, or fetters of our souls, why, in the fore-mentioned text, wherein our Saviour promised to St. Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the power of binding and loosing, why, I say, by these words may not be understood the power of unloosing the bonds and fetters of the soul, which obstruct its admission into the kingdom of heaven, as well as "the power of discerning spirits, or removing bodily ills, or binding them on the obstinate gain-sayer?" Again, why, in xxth chap. of St. John, by these words of Jesus Christ addressed to his Apostles at his Ascension, *receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you will forgive, they are forgiven, &c.* Why I say, by these memorable



ble words may not be understood literally the power of forgiving or absolving from sin, as well as the power of curing distempers of the body, of restoring the dead to life, or of taking it away from the living, which, according to this ingenious commentator, the Apostles did incontestably receive? I will presume to give an answer to these questions for him beforehand, until he gives a better; because the fore-mentioned texts, if taken in their obvious natural sense, would afford too strong a foundation for the doctrine of popish absolutions, jubilees and indulgences, and it is better the most harsh, violent, and strained interpretations I have mentioned should be admitted, than that so great an inconvenience should follow.

*Prot.* But supposing I should allow, that the Apostles were, according to the literal signification of Christ's words, invested with the extraordinary prerogative or power of absolving from sin, why should this power be any more extended to their successors, than the power of working miracles?

*Pap.* Because the power of working miracles was first granted in favour of our heathen ancestors to convince them of the truth of the gospel, the Apostles preached to them, and was judged by our divine Redeemer requisite for the establishment of the church in her infancy; but the power of absolving, like that of baptizing and preaching, was mercifully granted in favour of all sinners, of all the members of the church, and therefore was not limited to the Apostles alone, but was extended to their successors, with whom Jesus Christ promised to remain to the end of the world. Now, Sir, as you have just told me, that scripture alone is to be the rule of our belief  
of

any doctrine, I shall propose this one question to you, before we finish this conference, whether the scripture, particularly with regard to the fore-mentioned texts, is to be a rule of faith, as it is expounded by you, or by that zealous minister before-cited; or by your church; and whether your church is more infallible in her exposition of the scriptures than ours?

*Prot.* I take infallibility to be a mere chimera among a set of fallible men. I do not admit it in any human society whatsoever; besides, I detest those slavish systems, or principles of religion, which entail a servile subjection on the mind of man, which fetter our intellectual, our religious liberty, that of all the different species of liberty, is the most noble and most valuable. I abhor those shackles which are forged for our understandings, by a junto of ambitious, crafty, domineering ecclesiastics, no less than those chains which are forged by tyrants for our bodies: hence, Sir, the scriptures as interpreted by my own private judgment, and not by this, or that, or any society whatsoever, is my rule of faith; nor do I think myself obliged to admit any article, or tenet of religion, unless I am persuaded it can be proved out of scripture.

*Pap.* You seem, Sir, to have more elevated notions of religious liberty than the Apostle had, who speaks of the *captivating our understandings unto the obedience of faith, of submitting ourselves to our rulers, who are to give an account of our souls*; and, to the best of my knowledge, the scriptures somewhere require our *bearing the church* under the penalty of being deemed as *beathens or publicans*. Be that as it will, since you deem an interpretation of scripture, according to each

each believer's private judgment, to be the sole rule of faith, consistent with our religious liberty. I suppose you will extend that rule to every individual, and not confine it to yourself.

*Prot.* By all means I extend it to every individual of sound judgment.

*Pap.* Why then, Sir, in following your own rule, I am perfectly satisfied, you make my conscience quite easy with regard to the doctrine of our church concerning absolutions, jubilees and indulgences; for I assure you my private judgment coincides with her's in the exposition of the texts before so often cited in support of that doctrine; and as for the illiterate of our communion, they follow the dictates of their own private judgment in submitting it to that of the catholic church. As, therefore, we Papists rely with a firm confidence on the promises our divine Redeemer made to St. Peter, the first supreme pastor of his church, of giving him the keys of his heavenly kingdom, and on that made to all his Apostles, of his binding and loosing in heaven whatever they should bind and loose upon earth, and of forgiving those sins which they forgive, which power we believe not limited to them alone, but like that of preaching and teaching extended to their successors, for the good of the church to the end of the world; and as we think by these texts of scripture a power vested in the church of granting absolutions, jubilees and indulgences, I don't think you act consistent with your own principles, and rule of faith, in branding our sentiments with error and superstition, because they do not coincide with your's: permit then your popish friends to enjoy a share of that liberty of sentiments which you always challenge as an inherent



rent right of every individual of mankind, and to proceed in their devotions in this holy year of jubilee, without bestowing any more of your illiberal, inconsistent censures on them, until you can convince them of the following articles: 1st, That your own, or your church's interpretation of scripture is more secure, more natural, or more infallible than that of their's. 2dly, That Jesus Christ could give a power to the first pastors of his church to raise the dead to life, and to take it away from the living, as your zealous minister allows, but could not give them a power to absolve from sin, or from the penalties annexed thereto, which is what we understand by our absolutions and jubilees. 3dly, That, supposing Jesus Christ could, and was willing to give them such a power, he could make use of stronger and more perspicuous terms to confer it, than those he made use of. *Whatsoever ye shall bind, whatsoever ye shall loose, whatsoever sins you shall remit or retain, shall be, &c. &c.* 4thly, That he could not, or did not entail that power on their successors, with whom he however promised to remain to the end of the world. Lastly, That it is more natural to understand, by these expressions of our Saviour, viz. *binding* and *loosing*, *forgiving* and *retaining sin*, a power of curing bodily infirmities, or of discerning spirits, than a power of absolving from sin, or of granting jubilees and indulgences. When you can convince me of the truth of the foregoing articles, I promise to disregard all absolutions, jubilees and indulgences as much as you do at present.

*Prot.* Since you are so eager and fond of adopting those interpretations of scripture, which favour your popish absolutions and jubilees, much good may they do you; and since we cannot agree

in sentiments of religion with each other, I hope we shall notwithstanding agree in sentiments of mutual friendship and affection.

*Pap.* I have reason to entertain some doubt thereof on your part.

*Prot.* You surprize me, Sir; explain your doubt.

*Pap.* Do you not believe me to be a zealous Papist, and a zealous advocate for the doctrine of our church concerning absolutions, jubilees and indulgences.

*Prot.* I certainly do.

*Pap.* Pray, Sir, how is it possible for you to harbour sentiments of friendship or affection for any person whatsoever, professing a religion, which  
 “ encourages him to perpetrate the most nefarious  
 “ actions, which renders him an avowed enemy to  
 “ the civil rights of mankind, which infuses a turbulent, perfidious spirit into him, and destroys all  
 “ ground of confidence between him and his friend?” how can you be sincere in your attachment to an advocate of doctrines, “ whose genuine fruits  
 “ are violence and bloodshed, which let loose upon  
 “ you all the turbulent, and ungoverned appetites of  
 “ mankind, which spread their baleful influence over  
 “ the whole land, and bear against those very laws,  
 “ which were meant to be the bulwarks of our happiness,—doctrines, against which the honestest  
 “ principles, and even the most humane heart, are  
 “ scarcely proof; and when, by the powerful influence of these doctrines, the most horrid crimes are  
 “ committed, the Roman pontiffs have absolutions,  
 “ indulgences and pardons plentifully in store, and  
 “ which every village priest is ready to dispense to  
 “ the wretch that kneels before him, even with his  
 “ heart still wedded to sin, and without any abhor-

“ rence

"rence of his former guilt\*." Such is the representation your minister of the established church gives of the tenets of popery, with regard to absolutions and indulgences, through the course of his four Letters addressed to his popish parishioners, and then modestly tells them, "that if it be thought uncharitable in him to represent their religion in such a light as may render them obnoxious, that the fault lies in the tenets thereof, and not in his representation." Now, Sir, if you harbour so unfavourable an opinion of my religion, and its influence on my mind as this epistolary writer would fain inspire you with, how can I imagine your expressions of friendship and affection for me to be sincere?

*Prot.* I assure you, Sir, that neither the verbose declamation of that zealous gentleman against popery, and its tenets, nor any prejudices of religion, shall ever in the least diminish the friendship and attachment I have to you, and to my other friends of your communion. We must make some allowances for the intemperate zeal of those hot-brained zealots, whereof some I fancy are to be found in every church, and who are the least qualified to make converts to any. I must bid you adieu. My business calls me away. Your humble servant, Sir. 4 OCT 58

*Pap.* I am yours, Sir.

F I N I S.

\* See 1st letter, p. 25. See also 3d letter, p. 22, and 2d letter, p. 59.



